

Subject

NFAC #0831-79
14 February 1979

MEMORANDUM FOR: See Distribution

FROM : Coordinator for Academic Relations, NFAC

SUBJECT : DCI Discussion/Dinner on "Soviet Nationalities
Issues," Thursday, 22 February 1979

1. On Admiral Turner's behalf you are invited to participate in a Discussion/Dinner on the above subject in the DCI Conference Room on the date and time appointed (see paragraph 4 below). Our discussion will consider both immediate and long-term effects of changes that are taking place in the population of the Soviet Union, mainly in consequence of the higher growth rates of the non-European minorities. We shall be especially interested in the political and economic consequences if, as is reasonable to assume, the minorities become more assertive. We must also consider the probable impact upon the Soviet military and Soviet industry of increasing dependence upon recruits drawn from comparatively backward as well as potentially dissident minority ethnic groups.

2. The following have been invited from the outside and have accepted our invitation:

The Honorable Stanley R. Resor, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy

Ambassador Harry G. Barnes, Jr., Director General of the Foreign
Service and Director of Personnel, Department of State



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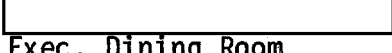
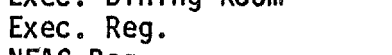
Paul Henze, National Security Council Staff

~~William T. Shinn, Jr., Director, Office of Soviet Union Affairs,
Department of State~~

Murray Feshbach, Foreign Demographic Analysis Division, Department
of Commerce

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Issues," Thursday, 22 February 1979

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NFAC/CAR/  (14 February 1979)

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3. [] will start our discussion. Attached are some
reading materials you may find useful, also a list of questions []
suggests we address ourselves to.

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4. The plan for the evening is as follows: The company will
assemble in the DCI Conference Room between 5:30 and 6:00. Refreshments
will be served. The discussion will begin at 6:00 and continue until
7:00 when dinner will be served. After dinner the discussion will be
resumed and will continue until approximately 9:00. If you are unable
to attend, please call extension []

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Attachments

Distribution: R. R. Bowie

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Questions for Discussion

1. How will the large disparities between the high birth rates and low industrial levels of development in Soviet Central Asia and the low birth rates and high levels of industrial development in the "European" republics of the Soviet Union affect future Soviet economic policy and performance?
2. How will Soviet military practices and capabilities be affected by the impending rapid increase in the proportion of Muslims in the country's pool of draft-aged males?
3. What are the implications for Soviet domestic and foreign policy of the simultaneous and associated upsurge of nationalism among the Russian and non-Russian peoples of the USSR?
4. What are the implications for US policy of these changes in the ethnic composition and configuration of the Soviet population?

22 February 1979

SUMMARY

The changes that are occurring in the ethnodemographic composition and ethnopolitical orientation of the Soviet population could seriously complicate the lives of future Soviet policymakers. Although these changes of themselves will almost certainly not lead to a breakdown of the Soviet system, they could generate considerable within-system stress and hamper the further growth of Soviet power.

The ethnodemographic composition of the USSR is characterized by a large disparity between the growth rates of the country's "European" (Slavic and Baltic) nationalities, which are low and have steadily fallen, and the growth rates of its "non-European" (Caucasian and Central Asian) nationalities, which are extremely high. Because the Europeans form such a large majority of the population, overall Soviet population growth has slowed to slightly over 1.3 percent per annum, while the proportion of "non-Europeans" in the population has risen from 11.5 percent in 1959 to an estimated 17 percent in 1977 and is steadily increasing. That the regime is seriously concerned about this situation is indicated by a variety of official statements and actions. However, current trends cannot possibly be stopped or reversed on short notice, and the spectre of a demographic "yellowing" that haunts many Soviet "Europeans" will become an increasingly salient fact.

By the late 1980s, there will probably not be enough "European" entrants into the industrial workforce to replace scheduled "European" retirees, let alone to staff new plants and enterprises. Even if scheduled retirements are deferred and non-industrial manpower is redeployed, the only sizeable reservoir of labor resources will consist of Central Asians. Short of a very sharp increase in labor productivity, therefore, continued economic growth will depend on the regime's willingness and ability either to shift its industrial center of gravity eastward toward the presently semi-developed republics of Central Asia, or to mobilize the presently non-migratory natives of those republics for work in other regions. Both of these alternatives, however, involve large costs and high risks.

On the one hand, a rapid buildup of Central Asia's industrial capacity would require the diversion of a great deal of scarce capital and equipment both from the already industrialized regions of the country and from underdeveloped regions that are far richer than Central Asia in essential natural resources. In addition, such a buildup would probably have the unintended but familiar effect of drawing scarce manpower away from other regions into Central Asia, where the natives are still predominantly technically unskilled peasants. On the other hand,

there is little prospect that these natives can be enrolled as *gastarbeiter* without the introduction of incentives and/or sanctions that could not only disrupt both the local and the all-union economy but could also generate serious national unrest. In consequence, there is a distinct possibility that Soviet economic growth will slow appreciably in the near future and that the regime will come under increasing pressure both to speed the acquisition of labor-saving Western technology and to introduce administrative and management reforms of a sort that, though potentially conducive to increased labor productivity, are costly to implement and fraught with political risk.

The manpower demands of the labor-short all-union economy will make it tempting for the regime to reduce the size of its armed forces. In addition to a potential manpower cutback, moreover, the armed forces will face the prospect of a substantial "yellowing." This is foreshadowed, if not foreordained, by the fact that the proportion of "non-Europeans" in the country's prime-age draft pool will increase from a low of 20 to 25 percent to almost 40 percent between the late 1980s and the end of the century. At a minimum, the regime will almost certainly have to abandon its current practice of assigning only a few atypical Central Asians to high-priority military units, while relegating typical Central Asians to construction, supply, and rear service functions. Despite improved schooling, the vast majority of typical Central Asians will probably still be poorly educated by European standards and have a weak command of spoken Russian. In consequence, there is little prospect that the impending decline in the quantity of Soviet military manpower will be counterbalanced by a significant increase in its quality. On the contrary, the language-related command, control, and communication problems that have heretofore been largely confined to relatively low priority units could spread to other units, with corresponding adverse effects on the country's military capabilities.

Although these problems could be significantly alleviated by a return to some form of "military federalism," the top leadership is unlikely to endorse any decisive move in this direction because of its fear that national units might provide tacit or open military support for nationalist challenges to central authority. Such challenges have become increasingly frequent and militant in recent years and are likely to become yet more so as a result of the impending "social mobilization" of the Central Asian nationalities, the backlash of the "European" nationalities in general and the Russians in particular to the "expropriation" of "their" resources to speed Central Asia's industrialization, the increasing exposure of the masses to dissident nationalist

spokesmen and to the demonstration effects of nationalist protests within the Soviet Union and in the outside world and the growing accessibility of weapons and explosives. Barring a major military defeat or a politically incapacitating succession struggle, there is little immediate prospect that national protest will rise to unmanageable levels. At most, there is likely to be a tenser version of the status quo--i.e., more numerous acts of individual and small group terrorism, more frequent episodes of collective violence, more massive protest demonstrations, more extensive public or semi-public dissent, and the like. Even such "manageable" outcomes, however, would force the regime to introduce or strengthen economically counterproductive and politically demoralizing police controls and could jeopardize its ability to secure economic concessions from the West and diplomatic support from the Third World.

Although the ethnodemographic and ethnopolitical pressures that it faces could lead the Kremlin to impose harsher restrictions at home and to tighten its grip on Eastern Europe, they could also conduce toward greater Soviet willingness to enter into balanced force reduction agreements and, more generally, toward a curtailment of Soviet "globalism" and the adoption of a lower Soviet profile in international affairs. For these latter possibilities to be realized, however, the West may have to apply--or be ready to apply--some of the leverage that it will inevitably acquire by virtue of the fact that the ethnodemographic and ethnopolitical pressures on the Soviet regime can to at least some extent be alleviated or exacerbated by Western actions.